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AUTHOR Teddlie, Charles
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ABSTRACT

Reporting on a study designed to evaluate West Court High School (WCHS, a pseudonym) in Louisiana, this document discusses quantiative and qualitative aspects of the study; the development of interview protocols for the administrators, teachers, students, and parents who participated; and the sociograms developed to assess the interaction patterns among faculty and administrators. A description of study results explores the nature, resolution, and consequences of problems identified at the school. Related school effectiveness factors are described: (1) lack of clarity on educational goals; (2) low expectations regarding academic achievement; (3) inconsistently applied school practices; and (4) inadequate instructional leadership. A sociogram analysis precedes a section on study conclusions that discusses seven factors in school effectiveness literature related to WCHS problems and offers recommendations for school improvement. Last, a context analysis mentions difficulties encountered in sampling former parents and former students. Included are seven tables and one figure. (22 references) (CLA)

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Evaluation of West Court High School, 1989-90

Charles Teddlie
Louisiana State University
Dept. of Admin. & Found. Services
111 Peabody Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-4121

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Abstract

University personnel entered into a contract with a local school board to conduct an evaluation of West Court High School (WCHS, a pseudonym) to determine if there were problems at the school and to recommend appropriate strategies for improving the school if problems were uncovered. The WCHS evaluation study was designed to include both quantitative and qualitative data. Several interview protocols were developed for the evaluation study including: an administrator's interview protocol; a teacher's interview protocol; a student's interview protocol; a parent's interview protocol; and a sociogram, which assessed the interaction pattern among the faculty and administration.

A representative sample of teachers, students and parents who were at WCHS or who had recently left WCHS was drawn. Altogether, 20 current students, 19 parents of current students, 11 current teachers, all 4 members of the current administration, 3 former teachers, 2 former parents, and 2 former students were interviewed. Fourteen of the twenty staff members returned completed sociograms.

Results of the study indicated that there were multiple problems at the school, and that these problems remained unresolved. Several of the factors associated with the WCHS problems are tied to the school effectiveness literature. These factors include: (1) low educational expectations for students; (2) lack of order and discipline in the classes; (3) inconsistent leadership; (4) lack of clarity regarding specific educational goals in the school; (5) lack of parental involvement; (6) unpleasant working conditions; and (7) problems in communication throughout the school. The evaluators made recommendations aimed at addressing these problems.

Evaluation of West Court High School, 1989-90

A local superintendent, with his board's approval, contracted with university personnel to determine if there were educational and racial problems at a high school, hereinafter referred to as West Court High School (WCHS, a pseudonym). The objectives for the superintendent were to determine if these problems existed, and, if so, to receive recommendations from the evaluators on strategies to improve the school. Issues that will be addressed in this paper include: methodological issues inherent in such an evaluation; political pressures faced by the evaluators in conducting the study; the role of the evaluators as social/educational change agents; and the utilization of results/recommendations from such a study.

The theoretical framework used for this study is that of the school effectiveness and school improvement (SESI) research area (Good and Brophy, 1986; Levine and Lezotte, 1990). While it is true that the SESI research area has been historically atheoretical (Slater, 1990), there is consistency of results (Geske and Teddlie, 1990) on some characteristics of effective schools, especially when school context variables are considered (Wimpelberg, Teddlie, and Stringfield, 1989).

In developing the questionnaires for the evaluation and planning the strategy for school improvement, four characteristics of effective schools were considered: (1) clearly stated school academic goals and objectives; (2) high academic expectations for students at the school; (3) orderly environment in the school and classrooms; and (4) strong instructional leadership by the principal, including frequent monitoring of class behavior.

METHODOLOGY

The Design of the Study

The West Court Evaluation Study (WCES) was designed to include both quantitative (numeric) data and qualitative (narrative) data. Standard evaluation guides (i.e. the Standards for Evaluations of Educational Programs, Projects, and Materials) strongly recommend that evaluation studies include both numeric and narrative data, since the two types of information complement one another. Quantitative data sources include questionnaires with standard response categories, such as three of five point scales. Qualitative data sources include notes taken during interviews or observations (Patton, 1980).

In the current study, the evaluators selected samples of participants from the following groups: (1) students currently enrolled at the school; (2) faculty currently teaching at the school; (3) students who had recently left the school; (4) faculty who had recently left the school; (5) parents of students currently enrolled in the school; and (6) parents of students who had recently left the school. Additionally four members of the school's administration (the principal, the two assistant principals, and the guidance counselor) were interviewed.

The interview protocol included items that were quantitative in nature (that is, included standardized responses) and qualitative in nature (that is, required the individual to respond in his/her own words). Additionally, the faculty and administrators were asked a series of questions about their interaction patterns with other staff members at the school. These sociograms (Kerlinger, 1986) permit a quantitative analysis of the interaction patterns among staff members at WCHS.

The interviewers were two members of the university consulting team. One member was black and one was white.

Development of instruments

In developing the interview protocols for the administrators, teachers, students, and parents, the evaluators reviewed the extensive literature on effective schooling that has developed over the last twenty years. According to Lezotte (1982), there are a number of characteristics that are commonly found in effective schools (Brookover and Lezotte, 1979, Edmonds, 1979; Rutter, et al., 1979; Teddlie, et al., 1984). These common characteristics include: (1) clearly stated school academic goals and objectives; (2) high academic expectations for students at the school; (3) an orderly environment in the school and classrooms; and (4) strong instructional leadership by the principal, including frequent monitoring of classroom behavior.

Parallel items were developed for the administrators, teachers, students, and parents. These questionnaires had six subsections, including questions on the four characteristics of effective schooling noted above (clear goals; academic expectations; classroom and school management and discipline; and instructional leadership, including classroom observations), plus background information and questions regarding perceived problems at the school. These questionnaires were designed to address the two primary

concerns of the study: (1) do problems exist at WCHS?; and (2) if so, how might the school be improved?

Sociograms were also developed to assess the interaction patterns among the faculty and administration of the school. Rutter, et al., (1979) concluded that a school's atmosphere is influenced positively by the degree to which the faculty and staff function as a coherent whole. Sociograms allow the researcher to determine if all members of the faculty are integrated into the communication and interaction patterns within the school. The particular sociogram developed for this study asked the faculty and administrators at WCHS to select individuals they would prefer to associate with in three work situations and one social situation. They were also asked to select with whom they would prefer to share an office if faculty offices existed.

Sample

The evaluators decided to interview representative samples of teachers, students, and parents who were at WCHS or who had recently left WCHS. All administration members were interviewed. The sample size for each of the groups is as follows:

(1) Eleven teachers currently on staff at WCHS;

(2) Twenty students currently at WCHS;

(3) One parent of guardian for each of the twenty WCHS students;

(4) Four students who had recently left WCHS; (This could not be attained because only two families were willing to allow their children to participate in the study).

(5) One parent or guardian for each of the students who had recently left WCHS;

(6) Three teachers who had recently left WCHS;

(7) All four members of the WCHS administration (principal, two assistant principals, guidance counselor).

A list of the eighteen teachers who were currently teaching grades 9-12 at WCHS was constructed. No special education teachers were included. The total population was stratified by race (black, white) and sex (male, female). Representative samples were selected within each of the two

strata using techniques suggested by Borg and Gall (1989). Altogether 11 of the 18 teachers were selected and interviewed.

Twenty WCHS students participated in the study. A list of forty students from grades 9-12 was developed, and project description/consent forms were sent to their parents. The forty students were selected through two methods:

(1) Employing a purposive sampling technique, the guidance counselor was asked to select the two students from each grade who seemed the most knowledgeable about the ongoing events at the school. These students could be considered key informants (Spradley, 1979), since they were quite knowledgeable about school events. This resulted in the names of eight students.

(2) Employing a stratified random sampling technique, eight students were selected from each grade. This resulted in a group of 32 students who proportionately represented the race/sex composition of the school's student body.

Consent forms, together with a brief description of the project, were sent to the parents/guardians of each of the 40 students. These forms asked that both the student and one parent-guardian participate. After repeated solicitations, twenty students and 19 parents/guardians agreed to participate.

The evaluators asked officials at the school board to supply names of teachers and students who had left WCHS since the 1988-89 school year. Altogether four teachers and fourteen students were identified. The evaluators decided to interview the three former teachers who had taught regular education classes at WCHS. Four former students were also selected using a stratified random sampling technique in which the students were stratified by race and sex. However, only two students were included in the study because only two families agreed to allow their children to participate in the study.

Qualitative analyses

The narrative data from the interviews was analyzed using the qualitative analysis system proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This system involves the emergence of themes through an iterative process of reading and categorizing the narrative data, which is then converted to notecard information. For instance, the problems perceived by the participants were organized into major categories on the basis of this sorting technique. An example of such a category is "disciplinary

problems" which would included all school/classroom management problems that have been identified.

RESULTS

Results of the study were summarized in an 88 page report (La Data, 1990) with 16 tables and one figure. The results answered the following six evaluation questions: (1) Are there problems at this school?; (2) What is the nature of the problems?; (3) To what extent have the existing problems been resolved?; (4) What are some of the associated consequences of the problem?; (5) What are some of the school effectiveness factors which may be associated with the problems?; and (6) What is the communication pattern at WCHS?

Problems at the School

The different groups of respondents were asked if they have observed problem(s) at the school during the preceding two years. The data in Table 1 (page 20) indicate that a large majority of the respondents perceive that there are problems at the school. For instance, 100% of the current students, former students, former teachers, parents of former students, and administrators agreed that there had been problems at the school. Only 27% of the current teachers and 15% of the parents of current students asserted that there had not been any problems. Thus, there is no doubt that the school has experienced some problems in the recent past.

The Nature of the Problems

The respondents indicated that there was a wide variety of problems which they have perceived over the past two years at WCHS. These problems fell into six major categories: (1) academic, (2) instructional, (3) attitudinal, (4) discipline, (5) poor facilities, and (6) poor leadership. Different groups of respondents seemed to emphasize different categories as the more serous problems. For instance, the majority of the current students and about half of the parents of current students cited instructional problems, such as poor quality of classroom instruction, lack of well qualified teachers, and favoritism by the teachers, as the most serious difficulties at the school. On the other hand, the current teachers indicated that negative student attitude towards education, such as low motivation for studying and learning and low academic performance, was the most serious problem area.

Sizeable portions of all groups believed that discipline is one the most serious problems in the school. All groups, with the exception of the current teachers, indicated that

lack of discipline and respect for authority by students are the most serious problems in classroom management.

Finally the data indicate that the majority of the former teachers and parents and the majority of the administrative staff think that poor leadership is one of the most serious problems at the school. The examples cited for this included events such as the suspension of some of the students from taking part in the football playoffs because of low academic grade point average and the lack of delegation of responsibility by the administrative staff. These findings suggest that the problems at WCHS are probably a combination of several factors taken together, as opposed to one incident or one factor.

Resolution of the Problems

It does not appear that the aforementioned problems have been resolved satisfactorily. The data in Table 2 (page 20) indicate that the majority of the respondents, with the exception of the students who are currently at the school, do not believe that the problems have been resolved. Especially the majority of the current teachers and parents and all of the former teachers, students and their parents held this point of view. On this issue, the administrative staff is equally divided between those who feel that the problems have been resolved and those who do not think so. The evaluation team's best judgement is that the problems have not been satisfactorily resolved.

Consequences of the Problems

The most obvious consequence of the problems at the school was that some teachers and students left the school following the conflict over the suspension of the football players for academic reasons. In all probability, this incident was not the only reason for their decision to leave, but it helped to ignite some of the frustrations which have been simmering beneath the surface. A close examination of the data concerning the perceived reasons why the teachers and students have left confirms this conjecture.

The data indicate that the majority of students, former teachers, parents and the administrative staff think students left because of poor or low educational quality. Furthermore, the majority of current parents, half of former students and administrative staff and a sizeable proportion of the other groups believe they left because of poor leadership and disciplinary problems at the school.

Similarly the data indicate that these groups feel that the teachers left because of lack of leadership and disciplinary problems. The only exception to this is that the current teachers feel that the students left for other reasons, such as to get away from teachers who gave them challenging school work and because their families moved. In the case of their colleagues who had left, the teachers suggested they left to seek better financial reward or because they could not stand the pressure at the school. These differences between current teachers and others reflect divergences in the perception of the problems and the divisions which may exist among the various groups.

In addition to the obvious consequences which are discussed above, the school also seems to suffer from general malaise and a feeling of helplessness among students, teachers, and parents. Our interviews and conversations with members of the different groups and on site observations indicate that this feeling developed over a period of time. The main contributors to this malaise appear to be the lack of effective resolution of problems, poor facilities, an unconducive physical environment and the negative public image of the school.

School Effectiveness Factors

There are school effectiveness factors which are associated with the problems at the school. These include the following: (1) lack of clarity on educational goals; (2) low expectations regarding academic achievement; (3) inconsistently applied school policies; and (4) inadequate instructional leadership. Each of these will be briefly described below.

Educational Goals

The SESI literature identifies educational goals as one of the correlates of effective schools (Edmonds, 1979; Teddlie et al., 1989). Effective schools have clearly defined goals, which concisely focus on desired educational outcomes. Common understanding of such goals would facilitate harmonious and cooperative working relationships and coherent efforts among school administrators, teachers, students and their parents.

In order to achieve at the maximum, educational goals have to be developed carefully and clearly conveyed to all of the involved parties. The results from our study indicated that respondents agree that WCHS has certain educational goals. The majority of the students, parents, former teachers, and administrators indicated that preparing for college, work, and life are the primary goals of education at

this high school. Similarly the teachers have indicated that preparing for college and life are the primary goals of education at WCHS. While there is an agreement on these very general goals, there are not any specific educational goals that have been identified.

With regard to the clarity with which the goals have been presented, about half the students and administrators and a large majority of the teachers indicated that the goals had been clearly communicated. In contrast to this, about half of the parents and administrators and all of the former students and their parents indicated that the goals had not been clearly communicated. This disparity may have resulted from the fact there is no formal communication of the specific goals of education at this school, as is the case at other more effective schools in the state. Often such goals are assumed to be implicitly understood by the concerned parties. Under such circumstances, it is likely that there is no common understanding of specific educational goals at WCHS. Data found in Table 3 (page 21) confirm this.

Educational Expectations

Normally, higher educational expectations by teachers, school administrators, parents, and students can have a favorable influence on educational outcomes such as higher student achievement (Edmonds, 1979; Brookover and Lezotte, 1979). A number of SESI studies have confirmed that effective schools usually have attributes such as higher educational expectations which, when combined with proper school policies and conducive educational environments, can result in higher academic achievement (Murphy, Weil, Hallinger, and Mitman, 1989; Teddlie, Stringfield, Wimpelberg and Kirby, 1989).

The results of this study indicate that the respondents feel that the academic achievement of WCHS students is the same as or worse than the achievement of students in similar grades in other schools in the state. The data in Table 4 (page 22) indicate that the majority of the students, administrators and all former teachers believe the WCHS students perform worse than students in other schools. For example, 80% of the students currently at the school believe they achieve worse or much worse than other students. In contrast to this, the teachers and parents currently at the school feel that the students' level of achievement is about the same as that of other students.

It should be noted that the respondents' expectation of student achievement appears to be a reflection of their assessment of the present level of student performance, rather than an assessment of the students' potential capabilities.

Furthermore, with regard to current school level performance, the respondents agree that the students at this high school perform at lower levels. Data indicate that the majority of the teachers and half of the administrators feel that less than 30 percent of the students at this high school are capable of getting mostly A's and B's. Half of the students interviewed indicated that less than 50 percent of the students are capable of getting mostly A's and B's.

School Policy

School policy can, of course, influence the educational environment and student performance at school. Well formulated policy and clear rules and regulations can facilitate smooth working relationships. Literature on school effectiveness indicates that effective schools have clear cut policies which, when implemented fully and consistently, can guide the educational process in such a way that educational goals can be successfully achieved.

The results of the study indicate that all of the respondents agree that there are school policies (rules and regulations) at WCHS. The data also indicate that a large majority of the teachers at the school, students and their parents agree that the policies have been clearly communicated to them. Furthermore, they have indicated that most of the policies deal with routine rules and regulations that one would find in similar educational organizations. This suggests that the school has a policy framework that could foster educational environment.

However, the respondents do not agree that the existing rules and regulations have been fully and consistently implemented. The data in Table 5 (page 23) show that all of the former teachers, students and their parents, and the majority of the parents of students who are currently attending the school feel that the existing rules have not been fully and consistently enforced. Even though the majority of the students and teachers who are currently in the school feel that the rules have been fully enforced, a sizeable proportion (37% and 40% respectively) do not think so. It appears that some of the school's problems are due to the perceived lack of full and consistent rule enforcement.

Instructional Leadership

Strong and effective instructional leadership is necessary for proper organization and smooth operation of schools. Both academic and disciplinary matters can be handled effectively and timely when such leadership is

available. Existing research results indicate that effective schools usually have such leadership.

The results of this study suggest that the respondents have split opinions on the question of whether the principal is a strong academic leader. The data in Table 6 (page 23) show that while a majority of the teachers and administrators at the school think he is a strong leader, only a third of the students and their parents think so. On the other hand, all of the former teachers, students, and their parents agree that he is not a strong leader. A sizeable proportion (30% and 36%) of the students in the school and their parents think that sometimes he is a strong leader. Their assessment of the principals' leadership is a mixture of positive and negative points.

Furthermore, their assessment of his leadership qualities gives a mixed message. The data indicate that while nearly half of the students currently in the school and their parents think the principal is a weak and inconsistent leader, the remaining respondents are somewhat evenly divided in describing different positive qualities which they think he has. For instance nearly half the students think he is helpful and trustworthy; about a third of the current teachers think he is fair and caring; and half of the administrative staff think he is firm and consistent. Thus no one quality emerged as a strong attribute of the principal.

Sociogram Analysis

In addition to the information gleaned from the interview questionnaires, the teachers and administrators at West Court High School were also asked to complete sociograms which assessed the interaction patterns among the faculty and staff at the school. At the school sociograms were distributed to 20 staff members at West Court High School. Fourteen individuals returned the sociograms. These sociograms involve asking individuals to select others that they would most prefer to interact with across 5 educational or social settings. Two scores could be determined for each individual based solely on other person's responses: (1) the social receptiveness score, indicating how many times a person was selected; and (2) the social acceptance score or sociometric status score, which assesses the order of selection (first, second of third choice) as well as the number of times chosen.

The ranges for both the social receptiveness and the sociometric status scores are high. The range for social receptiveness is from 3 to 23, with an average social receptiveness score of 10.3 and a standard deviation of 6.2. This means that the typical staff member was selected by 2

individuals for each of the 5 educational or social settings. The range of sociometric status scores was from 4 to 53, with an average sociometric status scores of 20.6 and a standard deviation of 14.1.

Sociometric status and social receptiveness scores for each of the 20 staff members are included in Table 7 (page 25). The principal at West Court High School is designated as staff member 13 in this diagram. His sociometric status score and social receptiveness score is third out of the staff of 20.

Sociograms can be constructed based on these data which indicate the interaction pattern within a school. Sociograms are very useful, because they identify cliques, or subgroups of individuals who interact primarily among themselves. A sociogram for West Court High School is presented in Figure 1 (page 26). It is based on social receptiveness scores and includes only those instances in which a faculty member selected another faculty member at least twice. To have included all single selection instance would have greatly cluttered the sociogram.

The sociogram indicates four cliques, which revolve around the four individuals with the highest social receptiveness scores (16, 18, 13, 20). Two of these cliques, 16 and 18 revolve around white staff members and are predominantly white cliques. The other two cliques, 13 and 20, revolve around black staff members and are predominantly black cliques. Of all the social interactions noted in Figure 1, 82% are within racial groups (34% black/black interactions; 48% white/white interactions). Only 18% of the interactions involve blacks and whites. The sociogram indicates that there were two distinct and separate patterns of communication within the school - one involving white faculty members and one involving black faculty members.

The interaction pattern of the principal (13) is particularly enlightening. He did not complete a sociogram, so all interactions related to him are cases in which others made the selection. Of the interactions noted for the principal in Figure 1, 100% were black/black. If single selection interactions had been included, the principal still was selected 90% of the time by another black.

Furthermore, three of the individuals (17, 6, 5) who selected the principal only had black/black selections from the rest of the faculty. Four of the five individuals who selected the principal as noted in Figure 1 (17, 7, 6, 5) also belonged to the other black clique which centered around 4.

The principal appears to be isolated in terms of communication patterns within the black faculty at West Court High School.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Results reported in the previous section indicate that there are, indeed, educational problems at WCHS, and that most people associated with the school do not believe that they have been resolved. Although there was one focal incident involving the suspension of football players, the problems appear to be caused by multiple factors. Manifestations of the problems include the exit of students and faculty from the school, plus a general malaise and feeling of helplessness on the part of the many faculty members, students, and parents that anything can be done about WCHS' problems.

Several of the factors associated with the WCHS problems are tied to the school effectiveness literature. These factors include: (1) low educational expectations for students; (2) lack of order and discipline in the classes; (3) inconsistent leadership; (4) lack of clarity regarding specific educational goals in the school; (5) lack of parental involvement; (6) unpleasant working conditions; and (7) problems in communication throughout the school resulting in unclear and inconsistent application of policies. Each of these seven factors have been discussed as major correlates of school effectiveness.

For instance, Edmonds (1981) listed the following characteristics as some of those associated with effective schools: (1) there is a climate of expectation in which no children are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement; (2) there is an atmosphere that is orderly without being rigid, quiet without being oppressive, and generally conducive to the instructional business at hand; and (3) administrative leadership is strong and without it the disparate elements of good schooling can be neither brought together nor kept together.

Phi Delta Kappa (1980) added the following characteristics to the list: (1) successful schools are characterized by clearly stated curricular goals and activities; and (2) successful schools are characterized by high levels of parental contact with the school and parental involvement with school activities. Finally, Rutter, et al. (1979) added these two characteristics: (1) outcomes were better in schools that provided pleasant working conditions for the pupils; and (2) a school's atmosphere is influenced positively by the degree to which it functions as a coherent

whole, with agreed ways of doing things that are consistent throughout the school and that have the general support of all staff.

A brief review of the study's results with regard to each of these characteristics of effective schools will be useful in setting the stage for recommendations for improving WCHS. With regard to low expectations for students, data indicate that expectations are lower than desirable. For instance, 80% of the current students and 100% of the former students believe WCHS students perform worse or much worse than students at other schools. Of the current teachers, 55% believe that less than 30% of the WCHS students are capable of getting A's and B's. With regard to discipline and order in the classrooms, data indicate that 35-40% of the current students and teachers see that as a problem at WCHS. Additionally, 50% of the current teachers and 100% of the administrative staff perceive discipline as a major classroom management problem.

With regard to leadership, there were conflicting opinions. Leadership problems were one of the major factors cited for why students had left WCHS. All former students, parents, and teachers indicated that there was not strong leadership at WCHS. Current students and parents split their opinions roughly equally across the three categories (yes there is strong leadership, sometimes there is, no there isn't) on this question. This mixed opinion was expressed by one current faculty member who said that "...if (the principal) has difficulty it is often because he does not explain himself... I have no doubt that (the principal) is sincere and is trying his best. I think sometimes his organizational and communication efforts diminish his leadership."

With regard to the clarity of educational goals, data indicate that there is agreement on general, broad goals, but that more specific educational goals are not delineated. Similarly, data indicate that several individuals do not believe the goals have been clearly stated. With regard to parental involvement, several teachers and parents indicated that there was not enough. One parent noted that only a handful of parents were involved in extracurricular activities at the school.

As for working conditions, data indicate that 30% of the current students and 50% of the administration cited poor facilities as one of the major problems at WCHS. One teacher commented that it was disheartening to work in a facility which had many deficiencies when the school board was going to build a new football stadium at another school in the parish.

Additionally, students, teachers and administrators cited poor facilities as a reason why some of the teachers had left the school. Finally, there was evidence the school was not functioning as a coherent whole leading to unclear and inconsistent application of policies. For instance, data indicate that current students, teachers and administrators are split in their opinions with regard to whether existing rules are fully and consistently enforced. In fact, 64% of the current parents say that the policies are not consistently enforced.

The lack of the faculty functioning as a coherent whole is illustrated in the sociogram (see Figure 1). It appears that there are two distinct faculties, one white and one black, with little communication across the two groups. Such a split in the faculty makes it difficult for WCHS to be as effective a school as it could be.

Recommendations

The recommendations for resolving the problems at WCHS will revolve around established methods for improving schools, which are based on a growing body of literature (Edmonds, 1982; McCormack-Larkin and Kritek, 1982; Lezotte and Bancroft, 1985; McCormack-Larkin, 1985). As noted by Edmonds (1982), school improvement must be schoolwide and should include input from principals, teachers and parents. The basic school improvement model involves the formation of a school-based improvement team which puts together a long-term plan for implementing improvement.

The first recommendation for addressing problems at WCHS would, therefore, be to form a school improvement team immediately. As noted above, the team should include administrators, teachers, and parents. Since we know there are communication cliques within the school, the school improvement team should be a joint project of the school administration and central office staff. Central office staff should be involved because they can use the data from this study to be certain that a representative sample of teachers from different subgroups is included on the school improvement team.

It may also be useful to assign one staff member the major responsibility for coordinating activities of the school improvement team, since that is likely to be a labor intensive role. This person should get some release time form teaching responsibilities to carry out this school improvement coordination role. It may be useful to bring in a new teacher to do this, since there are current divisions in the faculty.

The second recommendation would be to have the school improvement team develop a plan to address each of the seven factors associated with the problems at WCHS: (1) low educational expectations; (2) lack of order and discipline in the classes; (3) inconsistent leadership; (4) lack of clarity regarding specific educational goals in the school; (5) lack of parental involvement; (6) unpleasant working conditions; and (7) problems in communication throughout the school, especially as it relates to subgroups or cliques that do not communicate with one another. The process for undertaking school improvement has been widely discussed, and school improvement models are available (Brookover, et al. 1982; Fullan, 1990).

The school improvement team should locate the relevant literature related to school and teacher effectiveness as they begin developing their model for improvement at WCHS. A third recommendation would be that the school board hire an external expert on school effectiveness to provide in-service and technical assistance to the team, if the team decides that such an expert would be useful. The primary responsibility for school improvement must rest with the team; therefore, it must want external help if such help is to be productive.

The school improvement team should make a clear written statement of the academic goals for WCHS. These goals should then be broken out and expanded upon in a three-year plan for school improvement at WCHS. Each year, there should be attainable and evaluable subgoals, so that the team can see if improvement is occurring. A large part of this school improvement program would be the elevation of staff expectations for student achievement. Again, some in-service by external experts on how to raise faculty expectations may be in order.

As the school improvement team is developing the written statement about WCHS academic goals, it should also clearly restate all school policies and rules, especially those related to discipline and to participation in extracurricular activities. These policies and rules should be disseminated to all faculty and parents. The school improvement committee should try to be sure that there is consistent implementation of these rules and policies.

The school improvement team should recognize that there are communication problems among subgroups at the school and should do what it can to breakdown the differences. Assigning individuals from different subgroups at the school to work on problems to gether might help breakdown communication problems. Obviously, the school improvement team will have to address this problem, especially as it relates to different

reacial groups, very sensitively. Again, some in-service or consulting by external experts may be very valuable.

The school improvement team will need to address the issue of leadership at the school. There is some conflict of opinion as to whether the principal is a strong leader. It appears that the principal is well-liked, even among those who criticize his leadership. Those critical of him indicate that he appears inconsistent, and that this seems to be partially a function of his making a decision and failing to explain that decision even to the individuals involved.

The principal's difficulties appear to lie in the areas of organization and communication. This is compounded by the fact that his interactions, as indicated by the sociogram, are primarily with a small subgroup of black teachers. The existence of the school improvement team should help the principal, since it will be the team that has the responsibility for developing the improvement plan for the school. The principal will share responsibility with this team, and the school community will see that the principal is acting in tandem with the school improvement team to upgrade conditions at the school.

In the course of forming the school improvement team and developing the school improvement plan, some faculty or staff may express reluctance to participate in the program or to adhere to the policies of the team. For example, several parents and students have related an incident in which a teacher indicated to his/her class that he/she would never be forced to leave WCHS, regardless of the criticism that was focused at him/her. The fourth recommendation is that the central office seriously consider reassigning any faculty or staff member a WCHS who does not go along with the school improvement program at the school. The problems at WCHS did not develop over night, and some faculty and staff members may have such ingrained attitudes that change is not probable. Such faculty or staff members should be assigned to another school, where they can make a more positive contribution.

The fifth recommendation relates directly to the local school board. There is a perception, warranted or not, in the WCHS community that several board members do not care about the school. Several individuals related this perception to the evaluators, citing the state of the WCHS facility as an example of the lack of caring on the part of the school board. The evaluators believe that the commission of this study is a sign that the school board is concerned about the school. The evaluators further believe and recommend that the local school board should commit more resources to WCHS as a gesture of their concern for the school. It would be very useful to have

the WCHS school improvement team make recommendations to the board about how to spend such additional funds.

Context Analysis

As a brief postscript to this study, the evaluators feel that we should relate some unusual circumstances which occurred during the course of the study. One of the Standards for the Evaluation of Educational Programs, Projects and Materials (1981) is Context Analysis, which states that an evaluation should describe the political and social context in which a school program exists, so that its likely influences on the program can be identified. Specifically, this Standard suggests that any instances in which individuals, intentionally or otherwise, interfered with the evaluation should be reported.

In conducting the study, the evaluators did have difficulties in getting former parents and their children to participate. One of our consultants received unsolicited phone calls in which individuals indicated that parents of former students would decline to participate because of potential harassment from unnamed individuals. In fact, two parents who initially agreed to participate later declined. Therefore, our total sample for former parents and for former students was quite small. The evaluation team is unsure how this small sample may have affected our findings, but felt this interference should be reported.

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Table 1: Distribution of responses concerning whether or not there were problems at West Court High School during the last two years

	Existence of Problem(s)					
Category of Respondents	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Current students	20	100			20	100
Former students	2	100			2	100
Current teachers	8	73	3	27	11	100
Former teachers	3	100			3	100
Parents of current students	16	85	3	15	19	100
Parents of former students	2	100			2	100
Administrators	4	100			4	100

Note: N refers to the number of observations. % refers to the percentage of individuals making that response to the question. Each line represents a category of responses, and the total for each category is 100%.

Table 2. The degree to which past problems have been resolved

	Degree of Resolution of Problems							
Category of Respondents	Yes		Somewhat		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Current students	5	25	11	55	4	20	20	1000
Former students					2	100	2	100
Current teachers	1	11	3	33	5	56	9	100
Former teachers					3	100	3	100
Parents of current students	2	12.5	2	12.5	12	75	16	100
Parents of former students					2	100	2	100
Administrators	1	25	1	25	2	50	4	100

Note: N refers to the number of observations. % refers to the percentage of individuals making that response to the question. Each line represents a category of responses, and the total for each category is 100%.

Table 3. Whether or not common understanding of the school's goals exists among students, teachers, parents and administrators

	Understanding of Goals							
Category of Respondents	Common		Somewhat Common		Not Common		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Current students	10	50	3	15	7	35	20	100
Former students					2	100	2	100
Current teachers	9	82	1	9	1	9	11	100
Former teachers	1	33	1	33	1	33	3	100
Parents of current students	3	16	8	42	8	42	19	100
Parent of former students					2	100	2	100
Administrators	2	50	1	25	1	25	4	100

Note: N refers to the number of observations. % refers to the percentage of individuals making that response to the question. Each line represents a category of responses, and the total for each category is 100%.

Table 4. The respondents' assessment of the level of academic achievement of the students at West Court High School compared to the achievement of students in other schools

Comparative Level of Academic Achievement												
Category of Respondents	Much Better		Better		Same As		Worse		Much Worse		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Current students			1	5	3	15	14	70	2	10	20	100
Former students									2	100	2	100
Current teachers			1	9	6	55	2	18	2	18	11	100
Former teachers							1	33	2	67	3	100
Parents of current students	3	16	2	10	10	53	1	5	3	16	19	100
Parents of former students									2	100	2	100
Administrators					1	25	2	50	1	25	4	100

Note: N refers to the number of observations. % refers to the percentage of individuals making that response to the question. Each line represents a category of responses, and the total for each category is 100%.

Table 5. The distribution of responses regarding the degree to which existing rules have been fully and consistently enforced

Enforcement of Existing Rules								
Category of Respondents	Yes		Somewhat		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Current students	8	42	4	21	7	37	19	100
Former students					2	100	2	100
Current teachers	3	30	3	30	4	40	10	100
Former teachers					3	100	3	100
Parents of Current students	5	26	2	10	12	64	19	100
Parents of former students					2	100	2	100
Administrators	2	50	1	25	1	25	4	100

Note: N refers to the number of observations. % refers to the percentage of individuals making that response to the question. Each line represents a category of responses, and the total for each category is 100%.

Table 6. The respondents' assessment of whether or not the principal is a strong academic leader

Strong Academic Leadership by Principal								
Category of Respondents	Yes		Sometimes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Current students	7	35	6	30	7	35	20	100
Former students					2	100	2	100
Current students	9	82	2	18			11	100
Former teachers					3	100	3	100
Parents of Current students	6	32	7	36	6	32	19	100
Parents of former students					2	100	2	100
Administrators	3	75			1	25	4	100

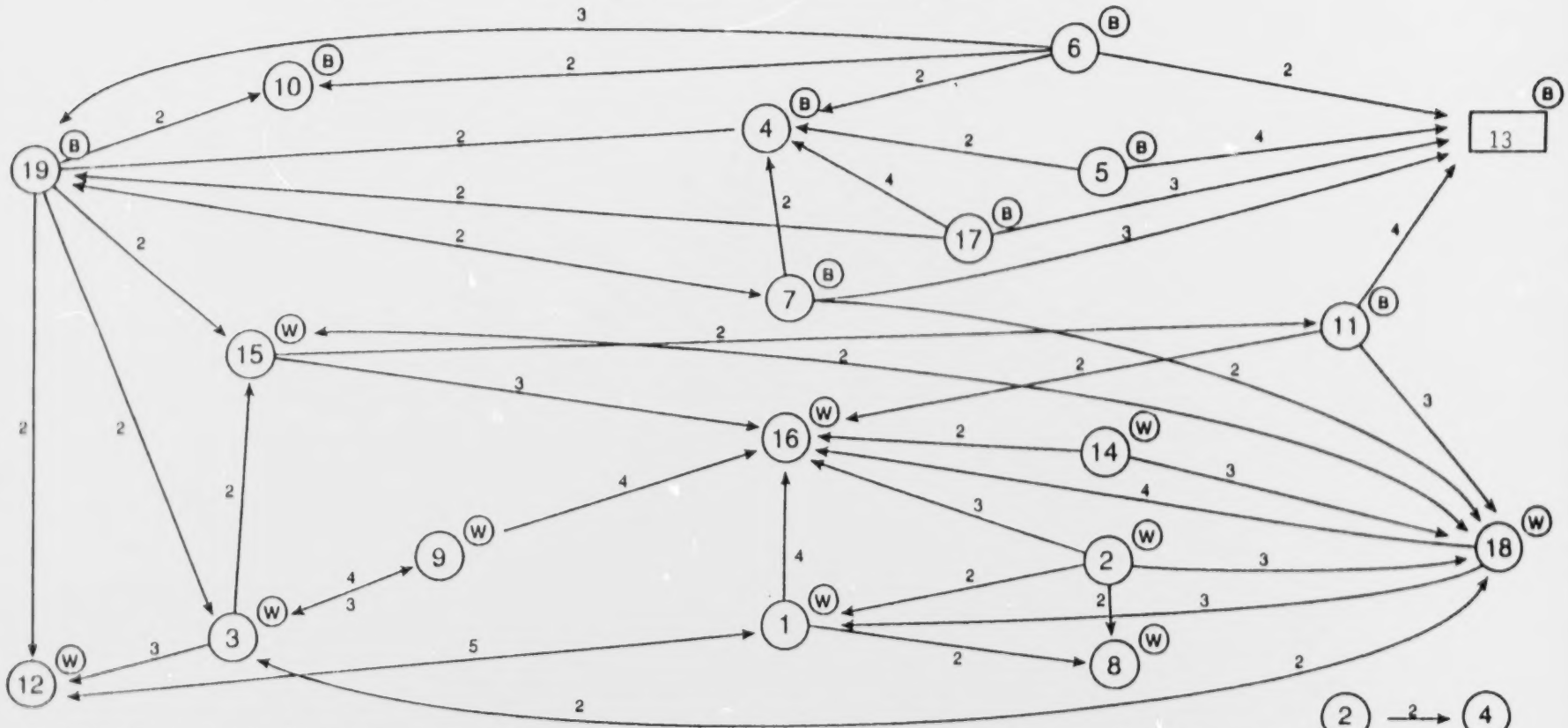
Note: N refers to the number of observations. % refers to the percentage of individuals making that response to the question. Each line represents a category of responses, and the total for each category is 100%.

Table 7. Social receptiveness and sociometric status for teachers and administrators at West Court High School

Staff Member	Social Receptiveness Score	Sociometric Status
20	4	9
19	10	23
18	21	42
17	3	6
16	23	53
15	14	35
14	3	4
13	20	41
12	13	25
11	4	7
10	14	29
9	5	7
8	8	15
7	5	10
6	7	10
5	9	14
4	17	34
3	14	28
2	5	9
1	6	11

Note: These are totals for 5 questions asking staff members to select three persons with whom to interact. Social receptiveness indicates the total number of times each person was selected. Sociometric status indicates the total number of times selected weighted by whether the individual was selected first, second, or third. A selection of first is weighted as 3, of second as 2, and of third as 1.

Figure 1. Sociogram of West Court High School



Note. The scores are social receptiveness scores, indicating the number of times a person was selected by another person. The arrow points to the person who was selected. Double arrows mean that the selection was reciprocated. If a person was selected only once by another person, that selection was not noted in the diagram. B refers to a black staff member; W refers to a white staff member. Two interactions were placed at the lower right corner because they would have cluttered the sociogram.